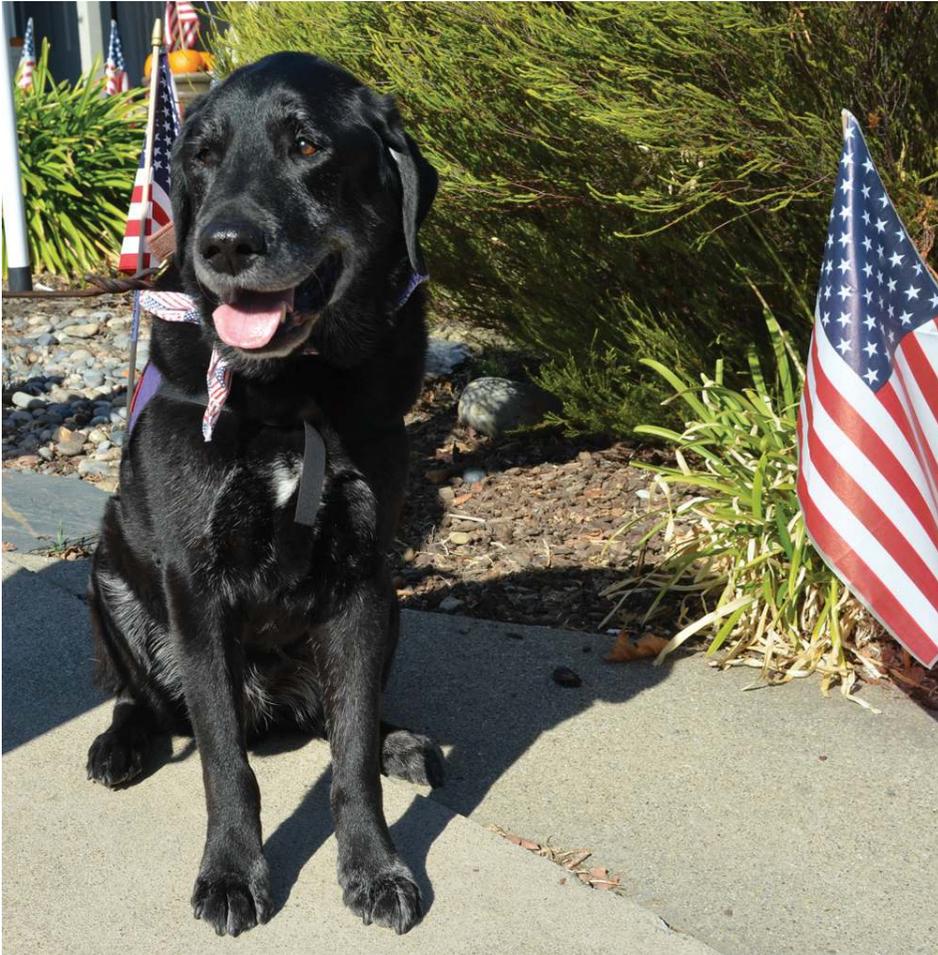


# THE INDEPENDENT • SECTION A



Lawrence the Livermore Lab is on hand to greet service personnel returning home.

## Therapy Dog Honored by AKC Humane Fund

The AKC® Humane Fund announced the winners of the 13th annual *AKC Humane Fund Awards for Canine Excellence (ACE)*, which commemorates five loyal, hard-working dogs that have made significant contributions to their communities in each of the following five categories: Exemplary Companion Dog, Law Enforcement, Search and Rescue, Service and Therapy.

Lawrence the Livermore Lab received an honorable mention in the therapy category.

The Labrador Retriever is owned by Patricia Wheeler of Livermore.

Wheeler nominated Lawrence for the AKC Humane Fund Award for Canine Excellence, Therapy Dog.

Soon after her husband died in 2001, she saw a segment about a therapy dog on Animal Planet's K9 to 5 about working dogs. Wheeler notes, "Inspired, I purchased Lawrence from an AKC-registered breeder in 2001. I realized Lawrence was a natural when out on a walk he 'pulled' me toward a disheveled drunk man by

a trashcan. Lawrence comforted him and put a smile on his face."

At 16 months, Lawrence, now certified by the Valley Humane Society, started going to an Alzheimers/dementia facility most weeks.

Lawrence, the Livermore Lab, a Black Labrador Retriever, was the first Valley Humane Society therapy dog at the VA in Livermore. He began visiting the VA in Livermore in July 2004. He's logged almost 1,300 hours of service there. When his tail reached one thousand

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## Grammy Nominated Perla Batalla Returns to Pleasanton

Firehouse Arts Center will host the return to Pleasanton of world music vocalist Perla Batalla on Sunday, October 7, 2012 at 2:00 p.m.

The Firehouse Arts Center is located at 4444 Railroad Avenue in downtown Pleasanton.

The Grammy-nominated singer/songwriter Batalla will perform songs that reflect her bicultural personal and musical heritage, blending contemporary American and traditional Spanish music.

Batalla grew up in Los Angeles, Calif. where her father, a musician, owned a popular Spanish language record store. She first gained international attention as a backup singer for Leonard Cohen who later encouraged her to embark on a solo career. Batalla released her debut album, "Perla Batalla," on the Warner/Discovery label in 1994. Like many original artists, however, she opted to go independent, releasing her second album, "Mestiza" in 1998 on her own Mechuda Music label. An immediate favorite on Public Radio shows throughout the U.S. "Mestiza" was selected as Best Independent Release of the Year by Amazon.com.

"Heaven and Earth" followed in 2000 and gained Perla recognition as Amazon's Emerging Artist of the Year. Both "Mestiza" and "Heaven and Earth" celebrate a powerful civilization formed by the coming together of separate worlds, a vibrant culture characterized by mysticism, imagery, magic and myth.

Batalla's follow-up to



Singer/songwriter Perla Batalla returns to Pleasanton, bringing her fusion of American and Spanish musical cultures.

the "Mestiza" song cycle was "Discoteca Batalla," named for her parents' record shop. The project is a compilation of original compositions interspersed with traditional Spanish language in which she took timeless songs heard growing up and molded their rhythmic and melodic forms to create a cross-pollination of trend and tradition. Batalla also recorded a tribute to Leonard Cohen entitled "Bird on the Wire," which includes special guests such

as David Hidalgo of Los Lobos, Bill Gable, Vinnie Coliuta, Greg Leisz, Julie Christensen and many other fine musicians.

Tickets are adults: \$15, \$20 and \$25; child: \$12. Group discounts are available. Tickets may be purchased online at [www.firehousearts.org](http://www.firehousearts.org) up to three hours prior to the performance, by phone at (925) 931-4848.

The entrance to free parking is on Spring Street near First Street.

## LAWRENCE

(continued from front page)

hours of service at the VA in September 2010, Lawrence was promoted to "Rear Admiral." He oversees all the "Petting Officers" at the VA. After moving through the "Petting Officer" ranks, the Navy veterans promoted him to "Rear Admiral" for 1,000 hours of tail wagging. Lawrence has worked with short-term and long-term patients, in physical therapy, and with social workers treating veterans with addiction problems and PTSD. He has had veterans certified to be his handler. One handler, who has been treated for PTSD for many years, made a remarkable improvement once he became a handler for Lawrence.

Since 2010, Lawrence has attended numerous Welcome Home Celebrations for troops returning from Afghanistan and Iraq. Wheeler

writes, "Troop members are always pleased to see him there, as he lets them know how special they are and thanks them for their service to our country with his wagging tail."

Lawrence has visited schools, marched in parades, gone to board and care facilities, attended community events, and participated in other activities in his nine-plus years as a therapy dog. He has about 1,900 hours of service.

Wheeler observes, "I have been so amazed at the success of Lawrence's work as a therapy dog that I am writing a book about his work and that of other therapy dogs. Tentatively entitled *Successful Tails: The Wonders of Therapy Dogs*, I hope to have it out soon so I can share all the fantastic stories about their

work. Many of the stories are about Lawrence as he does an incredible job."

Lawrence is an AKC Canine Good Citizen and an AKC Therapy Dog.

In 2012, he was nominated for the AKC Humane Fund Awards for Canine Excellence. As the "lead" therapy dog at the VA, Lawrence is involved with the evaluation of all potential handlers and therapy dogs, and also shows new therapy dogs how to do the job at the VA. His tail has had a workout during his career. His veterinarian has commented about all the muscle tissue around his tail.

When not working, Lawrence enjoys lying outdoors in the sun, going for walks with Pat's granddaughters, carrying toys to Pat, and, of course, eating.